

...THIS IS SEVERE WEATHER AWARENESS WEEK...

GOVERNORS TERRY BRANSTAD AND DAVE HEINEMAN...THE IOWA HOMELAND SECURITY AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIVISION...THE NEBRASKA EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY AND THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE HAVE DESIGNATED THE WEEK OF MARCH 25 TO MARCH 29 AS SEVERE WEATHER AWARENESS WEEK IN IOWA AND NEBRASKA. EACH MORNING THIS WEEK...THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE IN OMAHA/VALLEY WILL ISSUE A PUBLIC INFORMATION STATEMENT FOCUSING ON A DIFFERENT ITEM EACH DAY. TOPICS THIS YEAR INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING...

MONDAY...FLASH FLOODING  
TUESDAY...WARNING RECEPTION  
WEDNESDAY...TORNADOES  
THURSDAY...SEVERE THUNDERSTORMS  
FRIDAY...FAMILY PREPAREDNESS

ATTENTION MEDIA...IN ORDER FOR SEVERE WEATHER AWARENESS WEEK TO BE EFFECTIVE...MEDIA COVERAGE IS CRITICAL. PLEASE USE THE INFORMATION IN THE PUBLIC INFORMATION STATEMENTS IN YOUR NEWS PROGRAMS TO HELP PROMOTE SEVERE WEATHER SAFETY. WE ALSO ENCOURAGE MEDIA INTERVIEWS. PLEASE CONTACT BRIAN SMITH OR THE SENIOR METEOROLOGIST IF YOU ARE INTERESTED.

TODAY/S TOPIC IS FAMILY PREPAREDNESS

DISASTERS OF ALL KINDS DISRUPT HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF LIVES EVERY YEAR. EACH DISASTER HAS LASTING EFFECTS... BOTH TO PEOPLE AND PROPERTY. IF A DISASTER OCCURS IN YOUR COMMUNITY... LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND DISASTER-RELIEF ORGANIZATIONS WILL TRY TO HELP YOU... BUT YOU NEED TO BE READY AS WELL. LOCAL RESPONDERS MAY NOT BE ABLE TO REACH YOU IMMEDIATELY... OR THEY MAY NEED TO FOCUS THEIR EFFORTS ELSEWHERE. BEING PREPARED FOR A DISASTER CAN REDUCE FEAR... ANXIETY... AND LOSSES THAT ACCOMPANY DISASTERS.

THERE ARE FIVE KEY ELEMENTS TO A DISASTER PLAN:

- 1...LEARN ABOUT POSSIBLE DANGERS IN YOUR AREA AND BECOME FAMILIAR WITH YOUR COMMUNITY/S DISASTER RESPONSE PLAN. COMMON DISASTERS IN IOWA INCLUDE SEVERE THUNDERSTORMS... TORNADOES AND FLOODING
- 2...TALK TO YOUR FAMILY ABOUT WHAT TO DO IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY. PICK TWO LOCATIONS WHERE YOU WILL MEET - ONE CLOSE TO YOUR HOME AND ANOTHER REMOVED FROM YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD TO BE USED IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO RETURN TO YOUR RESIDENCE.
- 3...DEVELOP A CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLAN TO INSURE THAT YOUR

FAMILY WILL BE ABLE TO STAY IN CONTACT IF YOU ARE SEPARATED DURING A DISASTER.

4...CREATE EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS KITS FOR YOUR HOME... OFFICE AND CAR.

5...PRACTICE YOUR PLAN!

#### ASSEMBLE A DISASTER KIT

A DISASTER SUPPLIES KIT IS A COLLECTION OF BASIC ITEMS THAT MEMBERS OF A HOUSEHOLD MAY NEED IN THE EVENT OF A DISASTER. AN EFFECTIVE DISASTER KIT CONTAINS ENOUGH FOOD... WATER AND OTHER SUPPLIES FOR EACH PERSON TO LAST THREE DAYS. HERE IS A BASIC LIST OF ITEMS TO INCLUDE IN A KIT:

- FOOD AND WATER
- BATTERY OR HAND CRANK OPERATED RADIO
- FLASH LIGHT AND EXTRA BATTERIES
- FIRST AID SUPPLIES
- CLOTHING... SHOES AND BLANKETS
- WHISTLE
- CASH AND COINS
- PHOTOCOPIES OF IMPORTANT FAMILY DOCUMENTS SUCH AS ID'S AND CREDIT CARDS
- BABY NEEDS
- SANITATION ITEMS SUCH AS HAND SANITIZER AND TOILET PAPER
- SPECIALTY ITEMS SUCH AS PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS AND EYEGLASSES
- GAMES TO PASS THE TIME

#### DEVELOP A FAMILY EVACUATION PLAN

EVACUATIONS ARE MORE COMMON THAN PEOPLE REALIZE. HUNDREDS OF TIMES EACH YEAR... TRANSPORTATION AND INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS RELEASE HARMFUL SUBSTANCES... FORCING THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE TO LEAVE THEIR HOMES. FIRE AND FLOODS CAUSE EVACUATIONS EVEN MORE FREQUENTLY.

#### TIPS FOR A GOOD EVACUATION PLAN:

- PLAN ROUTES FROM YOUR RESIDENCE TO A SAFE LOCATION.
- PLAN FOR WHAT YOU WOULD NEED TO TAKE WITH YOU SHOULD YOU NEED TO LEAVE YOUR HOME FOR AN UNKNOWN PERIOD OF TIME.
- ENSURE ALL FAMILY MEMBERS KNOW WHERE TO GO SHOULD YOU BE SEPARATED.
- RADIO MESSAGES WILL INFORM YOU OF SPECIFIC ROUTES AND SHELTER AREAS SHOULD A MAJOR INCIDENT OCCUR.

IF YOU SHOULD BE EVACUATED...IT IS IMPORTANT TO FOLLOW RECOMMENDED EVACUATION ROUTES...DO NOT TAKE SHORTCUTS AS THEY MAY BE BLOCKED. BE ALERT FOR WASHED-OUT ROADS AND BRIDGES AND DOWNED POWER LINES. IF YOU HAVE TIME...BE SURE TO SECURE YOUR

HOME BEFORE LEAVING AND LET OTHERS KNOW WHERE YOU ARE GOING.

#### DON/T FORGET PETS

IF YOU ARE LIKE MILLIONS OF ANIMAL OWNERS NATIONWIDE...YOUR PET IS AN IMPORTANT MEMBER OF YOUR FAMILY...SO MAKE PLANS FOR YOUR PETS TOO! FOR PUBLIC HEALTH REASONS...MOST SHELTERS DO NOT ACCEPT PETS. PREPARE A LIST OF KENNELS...FRIENDS AND FAMILY MEMBERS WHO MAY BE ABLE TO CARE FOR YOUR PET IN AN EMERGENCY. PACK AN EMERGENCY KIT FOR YOUR PETS AS WELL. THE KIT SHOULD INCLUDE A SUPPLY OF PET FOOD...WATER...MEDICATIONS...VETERINARY RECORDS AND ITEMS LIKE CAT LITTER. MAKE SURE IDENTIFICATION TAGS ARE UP TO DATE AND SECURELY FASTENED TO YOUR PET/S COLLAR. IT IS ALSO A GOOD IDEA TO HAVE A PHOTOGRAPH OF YOU AND YOUR PET AS THIS CAN ESTABLISH OWNERSHIP IF YOUR PET IS LOST.

#### PREPARE YOUR HOME

THERE ARE NUMEROUS STEPS YOU CAN TAKE IN AND AROUND YOUR HOME TO HELP LIMIT THE DAMAGE DONE BY SEVERE WEATHER. CONSIDER TAKING THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS BEFORE SEVERE WEATHER BLOWS THROUGH TOWN:

#### FLOODING...

- ELEVATE THE FURNACE...WATER HEATER AND ELECTRIC PANEL IN YOUR HOME IF YOU LIVE IN AN AREA THAT HAS A HIGH FLOOD RISK.
- CONSIDER INSTALLING SEWER BACKFLOW VALVES.
- ADD WATERPROOF VENEER TO EXTERIOR WALLS.

#### THUNDERSTORMS AND STRONG WINDS...

- REMOVE DEAD OR ROTTING TREE BRANCHES THAT COULD FALL AND CAUSE INJURY OR DAMAGE.
- SECURE OUTDOOR OBJECTS THAT COULD BLOW AWAY OR CAUSE DAMAGE.
- SHUTTER WINDOWS AND SECURE OUTSIDE DOORS.

THIS CONCLUDES SEVERE WEATHER AWARENESS WEEK 2013.

BRIAN E. SMITH

WARNING COORDINATION METEOROLOGIST

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE OMAHA/VALLEY NE

WWW.WEATHER.GOV/OMAHA